United Nations E/CN.6/2011/NGO/6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
26 November 2010

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fifth session
22 February–4 March 2011
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2011/1.

10-65704 (E) 040111

Please recycle

Statement

1. Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, is an international organization with over 31,000 members worldwide. Founded in 1919, Zonta International's mission has always been to advance the status of women. In 1938, Zonta International established the Amelia Earhart Fellowship Program to encourage and financially support women pursuing PhD/doctoral degrees in aerospace-related sciences and engineering. The fellowships were established as a living memorial to Zontian and aviatrix Amelia Earhart and are intended to encourage women to expand their career options. Since its inception, 1,297 fellowships totalling $7 million have been given to 902 fellows from 64 countries. Through advocacy, Zonta International is dedicated to helping women break through the obstacles to education, especially in the areas of science, technology and engineering.

2. As evidenced by the reports of an expert panel convened by the Commission, there are many areas of achievement that still need to be addressed, such as:

- The enforcement of laws for equal education, especially in the fields of science, technology and engineering. While many countries have enacted such laws, implementation is necessary for changes to occur
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action emphasize the need to increase women's access to science and technology education. This was reinforced in 2000, during the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
- Bias and gender stereotyping limit the education and empowerment of women and must be abandoned in order for women and girls to be truly empowered
- The marginalization of women and girls in the areas of science, technology and engineering education through bias or gender stereotyping prevents them from having equal opportunities to full employment and decent work
- Violence against women and girls is an enormous barrier to equal opportunity and must be addressed. Women and girls will not attend school if attempting to do so makes them fear for their lives
- Equal pay and gender discrimination in the workplace are two important issues that if ignored will stymie the advancement of the status of women everywhere and impede their empowerment
- The assertion that women are not suited to science, technology and engineering because of biological gender differences is merely justification for the exclusion of women and girls from these educational fields
- Women must be included in policymaking decisions so that they may help to structure a non-biased, gender-equal education system

Although progress has been made, there is still a need for laws that provide for the inclusion of women and girls in education and job training. Many women's groups around the world have called for increased emphasis on the need to bring women into the mainstream of science, technology and engineering education. Women must be free to accomplish their goals in whatever area they choose if they are ever to achieve true empowerment. At present, many girls all over the world have no educational goals because they know that those paths are closed to them.